PRESS RELEASE

Office of the United States Attorney
Middle District of Florida

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For Immediate Release

August 16, 2006

ARRESTS MADE IN SMUGGLING OF TWENTY CUBAN MIGRANTS

Fort Myers, FL – United States Attorney Paul I. Perez today announced the indictment of Noel Lopez, age 32, and Juan Gonzalez-Hernandez, age 38, charging each with conspiracy to bring aliens into the United States. Both individuals are from the Miami, Florida area. The charge carries a sentence of up to ten years' imprisonment, and a fine of $250,000. The individuals were apprehended on August 15, 2006 aboard a twenty-five foot vessel following the arrival of twenty Cuban migrants at the foot of the Jolley Bridge on Marco Island, Florida.

The Collier County Sheriff's Office Marine Unit boarded the vessel off the coast of Marco Island following the arrival of the migrants. Upon further investigation of the vessel, approximately sixteen life vests, a tarp used to cover the aliens, and substantial food provisions were located.

Participating in the joint investigation were the Collier County Sheriff's Office, the United States Border Patrol, and the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jesus M. Casas of the Southwest Florida Division of the U.S. Attorney's office for the Middle District of Florida.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless, and until, proven guilty.

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